

From: Shenika Ward wards@sandhills.edu
Subject: What is DEI, and Why is it SO Important?
Date: Jan 9, 2023 at 12:41:08 PM
To: Shenika Ward wards@sandhills.edu

Greetings SCC,

As individuals, we are representative of several different groups, whether inwardly or outwardly facing. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a term used to describe policies and programs that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals, including people of different ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, cultures, sexual orientations, and perspectives. *Whew, talk about a run-on sentence!* It is important to note that this list is only partially inclusive, as there are many facets of identity.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, some of you may wonder why this is even a discussion within higher education. Well, I'm glad you asked! Regardless of what our personal belief systems are, our students, faculty, staff, and community come to SCC with a range of lived experiences that we must acknowledge when interacting with one another. For instance, we have 16-year-old dually-enrolled high school students, military veterans, first-generation students, individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual (LGBTQIA+), and a variety of other groups and identities that exist on our campus and in the world around us.

Differences will *always* exist, so the goal of DEI is NOT to determine others' personal views but to dismantle barriers that keep us from connecting, learning, and feeling that sense of belonging. The college's mission is to provide educational opportunities of the highest quality to all we serve (***with a heavy emphasis on all***). Last semester, as I transitioned into this role, I, along with the DEI team, began discussing the future of DEI here at Sandhills and what that looks like. As we move forward, we are very thoughtful about aligning our strategic plan with the college's strategic plan. Additionally, we look forward to engaging the campus this Spring with a range of culturally relevant programming. In the meantime, be on the lookout for our very first DEI Newsletter, just days away!!!

Best,

Shenika E. Ward, Ed.S

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Pronouns: she/her/hers ([*What is this?*](#))



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